

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF  
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

*Fourth Series*

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 908.

SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1881.

PRICE 1½d.

## DEGENERATION.

It may not be generally known that, amongst animals and plants, certain exceptions exist to the rule that living development means and implies progress. All animals and plants by no means attain as adults to a higher place and structure than they occupy at the commencement of their existence. Occasionally, the beginnings of life are in reality of higher nature than the completion of existence; and it can be proved that many living beings in their perfect state are absolutely of lower grade than when progressing towards maturity! It is to these curious facts in natural history that the collective name of 'degeneration' has been applied. The animal or plant which sinks or retrogresses to a lower place in the living world as time passes, and which thus develops backwards, so to speak, is said to 'degenerate.' It is of high interest to trace out several examples of this, and to note the inferences that may be drawn from them; since it may be shown that the analogies of degeneration may extend even to man's estate and affect even human destiny itself.

No condition of animal life is more effectual in inducing degeneration of structure than the adoption of a parasitic mode and habit of existence. The parasite lives on another animal or plant, and may be a lodger merely, seeking shelter and nothing more; or it may, when a typical parasite, depend upon its host for food as well as shelter. Such unwelcome guests are often a source of disease to the animals and plants which harbour them. But nature seems to revenge the host, by degenerating the parasite. An admirable law exists in nature, called the 'law of use and disuse.' Use and habit develop an organ or part, and judicious use increases the size and strength of living structures. Conversely, disuse causes atrophy, wasting, and decay of the organs of living beings. Applying this well-known fact to the animal which has adopted a parasitic existence, we can readily enough understand why a process of physiological backsliding is represented in its

history. With no need for legs or other organs of motion in its fixed condition, the parasite is in time deprived of these appendages. If it obtains its food ready-made from its host, nature will cause the disused digestive organs it once possessed for active use, to degenerate and to disappear. If at one time in its earlier career the creature was endowed with organs of sense, useful to an active animal, these will disappear by disuse when the parasite becomes fixed and motionless. There is, in short, no part of its structure which will not be affected, modified, and degenerated through disuse and it may be other conditions incidental to the parasitic life.

Illustrations of these remarks abound in the animal world. Take, for instance, the case of *Sacculina*, a parasite on hermit crabs. Each egg of a *Sacculina* first develops into a little active creature called a 'nauplius.' This organism swims freely in the sea. It possesses three pairs of legs, an oval body, and a single eye placed in the middle of its frame. Soon the two hindmost pairs of legs are cast off, and a kind of shell is developed over the body, and six pairs of small swimming feet replace the missing limbs. In this state it passes a short period of life, and the young *Sacculina*, like the majority of other animals, is apparently in the way of advance and progress. But the day of degeneration draws nigh. The two foremost limbs increase greatly in size; these members finally become branched and root-like; and the eye disappears along with the six pairs of swimming feet. The animal then seeks the body of a hermit crab; attaches itself by its roots, and then degenerates as the adult into the bag-like parasite whose roots, penetrating to the liver of the crab, absorb the juices of the crustacean host as food. Thus, a full-grown *Sacculina* is a mere sac or bag, which in due time develops eggs, and which drags out an inactive existence attached to the crab; water flowing in and out of the sac, by an aperture placed towards its lower extremity.

Another life-history which runs in parallel lines with that of the *Sacculina* is the develop-

ment of the barnacles, which attach themselves in large numbers to the sides of ships and to floating timber. Each barnacle consists of a body, inclosed in a shell, and attached to its floating log or ship by a fleshy stalk. From between the edges of the shell protrude some twenty-four delicate filaments, representing the modified legs of the animal, no longer used for motion, but serving, as a well-known naturalist puts it, to kick food into the barnacle's mouth. A digestive system exists, but there are no sense-organs in the shape of eyes. Now, the barnacle begins life as does the *Sacculina*. Its first stage is a three-legged oval-bodied 'nauplius,' which swims freely in the sea. This baby barnacle possesses a single eye, and a mouth and digestive system. Then it casts off its two hinder pairs of feet, and develops a shell and the six pairs of swimming-appendages, like the young *Sacculina*, whilst the two front-legs increase greatly in size. In this latter condition, the barnacle develops two large compound eyes in place of the single eye of its earlier stage. But the mouth and digestive system have disappeared, and the young barnacle's energies are now chiefly devoted to seeking a resting-place on floating wood. Fixing itself by the front pair of legs, and thus gluing its head to the object, the shell of the full-grown barnacle is soon developed, whilst the six pairs of legs become the brush-like tentacula wherewith food is swept into the mouth. A digestive system and nerves then appear, and barnacle-history may thus be regarded as complete. Nevertheless, a barnacle as a full grown animal is thus in some respects decidedly inferior to its youthful stages. Especially it wants locomotive powers; and its eyes are degraded; although, in possessing a digestive apparatus, it exhibits an advance on immature life. But the barnacle is not a parasite. It is merely a fixed and rooted animal, and as such has a necessity for a digestive system, which, as we have seen, disappears in the parasitic animal.

Degradation, thoroughly complete in *Sacculina*, and to a certain extent in barnacle-life, thus depends in the one case upon a habit of parasitism, and in the other upon fixity of body. The tendency of this process of backsliding is clearly enough seen in its power of rendering the adult—ordinarily a complex being—simpler in structure than the young. To impress these facts still more firmly on the mind, let us investigate the life-history of a species of prawn (*Peneus*) whose development runs in its earlier stages parallel with that of the barnacle and *Sacculina*. Prawns, lobsters, shrimps and crabs, form the highest division of the crustacean class. They greatly excel such forms as the barnacles in structure, as common observation shows. *Peneus*, as one of the prawn-group, begins life as does the barnacle or *Sacculina*, as a veritable 'nauplius,' with an oval body, a single eye, and three pairs of limbs. Then succeed other stages resembling those through which the crabs pass, and finally the features of the young prawn are in due course evolved.

From one common form, then, namely, the three-legged larva, which we name a 'nauplius,' we discover that animals so widely different as barnacles and prawns are developed. The fact testifies most clearly in favour of the idea, that

the development even of animals belonging to the same great class may vary in a most typical manner. The one development represented by that of the prawn proceeds along lines which are those of progress and advance; since the prawn is a much higher animal than its young. In the barnacle there is degeneration in some respects, but advance in others; so that the state of matters in the barnacle represents history intermediate between advance and decline. But in the *Sacculina* are witnessed degradation and retrogression of the purest type. The animal goes backwards in the world, until it sinks to the level of a mere tumour-like growth, attached to the body of its crab-host. Endowed first with powers of locomotion, these wholly disappear; furnished with an eye, that organ likewise vanishes away; and parasitism works its will on the animal's frame, degrading it to such an extent, that but for a careful tracing of its history, we could not have discovered that it was a crustacean at all.

The well-known animals we name 'Sea-squirts' present us likewise with examples of degradation arising, like that of the barnacles, from a habit of fixing themselves. Each sea-squirt or *Ascidian* resembles in shape a jar with two necks, as we find it attached to shells and other objects. Its whole frame is inclosed in a dense, tough, leathery membrane, through which the stimuli of the outer world can with difficulty pass. Yet the sea-squirt, rooted and fixed as it appears to be, begins life as a free-swimming tadpole-like being, which propels itself over the surface of the sea by means of its flexible and muscular tail. This tadpole-like body exhibits a superior structure in many respects in the eyes of a zoologist. For instance, it, of all invertebrate animals, possesses a representative of the spine or backbone of the vertebrates. It is the only animal which, like the latter group, has a nervous cord lying above this spine; it has an arrangement of gill-clefts like the fishes, and it has an eye which is formed just as our own eyes and as those of all other vertebrates are developed. Yet to what end is all this promise of high structure? Backsliding becomes the order of the day; the tail of the larva disappears; its internal organs are modelled on a lower type; its eye fades away; it fixes itself by its head, like the young barnacle; and it finally degenerates into the rooted, immobile sea-squirt inclosed in its leathery investment.

The topic of degeneration has, however, more extended applications than those which we have thus hurriedly chronicled as applying to the explanation of the lowness of some animal forms as compared with others. Physiology teaches us that there exists in all living beings from animalcule to man, a natural process of degenerative change, in virtue of which the worn-out particles of our tissues are perpetually being thrown off as their functions fail. The daily waste of our frames is in large measure a process of degeneration. Still more clearly is that process a degenerative one, which despoils us in old age of our teeth, whitens our hair, dims our eyesight, and wastes and changes in greater or less degree every organ and tissue of our body. So also, many diseases which affect us, apart altogether from the general breakdown and backsliding of structure that accompanies old age, are the results

of what physicians truly name 'degeneration.' Thus, so far from being any peculiar or abnormal action of life, degeneration is as natural to our existence and to that of living beings at large, as development and progress. The living being may in fact be said to occupy one of three positions in the universe of life in respect of the alterations to which it is subject. Either its race is progressing, or its species is declining and degenerating, or last of all, and more rarely, the living form is stable and at rest—in equilibrium, as one may put it. Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that progress and advance are by far the most constantly represented condition of life. Were it otherwise, we should not find the universe of life so varied as it is; and the progress of development is by no means likely to be replaced to any momentous extent by the law of backsliding, whose effects we have endeavoured to describe.

The foregoing remarks would be imperfect, and even misleading, were we to fail to note that there is at least one aspect of degeneration in which it becomes related in the most intimate manner to both progress and advance. The development and rise of an animal in the scale of creation is accompanied as a rule by the disappearance of organs and parts which pertain to lower stages of life, and to its own immature condition. The tadpole in becoming the perfect frog exhibits degeneration in the disappearance of its tail; for the frog, as every one knows, is a tailless being. Then secondly, its gills degenerate and disappear through natural, or more popularly speaking, constitutional causes, inherited by the frog from its ancestors. Opposed to the degeneration of its gills is the independent development of lungs, which development evinces the higher nature of the lung-breather over the pure gill-breathing tadpole. Here, therefore, degeneration is working out the purposes of development. It is, in other words, wiping away and destroying the evidences of the lower nature which is being replaced by a higher stage and type of life. The young crab is tailed like the lobster or prawn; but degeneration of the tail converts the crab into a higher type of crustacean than the lobster, and internal change of like nature makes the perfect insect as well as the crab, a higher being than its larva.

If, therefore, we take a wide view of living nature—a view in which alone the true analogies of things are to be clearly perceived—we shall find degeneration at one time ruthlessly driving the animal form to lower confines of life; whilst at another time, we shall see the same process accompanying advance and progress hand in hand, and aiding the growth of the higher life by restricting and abolishing the evidences of the lower and imperfect existence.

### THE FORTUNES OF BERTRAM OAKLEY.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.—BERTRAM'S LAST ATTEMPT.

WHEN the project of pushing on to Blackwall itself, and of presenting himself to Mr Mervyn as a supplicant for employment, for the first time took definite shape in Bertram's mind, the sun, which had shone so brilliantly through the short winter's day, was sinking in the western sky, and gleamed opalescent through the smoke of London. From the river, a gray mist was beginning to

rise, clinging, as yet, to wharf-edges, against which the lapping water washed, but gradually creeping higher as the evening darkened. Bertram had been walking, now, for many hours, and was faint and weary, and sick of heart. He was not quite destitute; but the two or three shillings that his slender purse contained were too precious to be wasted, so that although he looked wistfully at the steamboats snorting and splashing their way down-stream, and at the omnibuses that demurely passed him, with half-open doors, tempting a possible passenger, he still continued self-denyingly to walk on.

He had not accomplished the long distance which, in such bitter and biting weather, he had that day traversed on foot, entirely without more sustenance than the clear-starcher's lump of cake could impart. But a slice of cold meat and a piece of bread, purchased at a wayside cookshop, gave him only a temporary strength; and as he plodded on, he began to realise the fact that he was very tired indeed. He had gone far, and had still some distance to get over; but his tread was no longer elastic, as it had been when he started that morning from the Old Sanctuary in Westminster, and the bag which he carried felt strangely heavy as he trudged on.

What was Bertram to do, if he should reach the yard of Mervyn & Co. too late, after business hours, and after the head of the house had departed? This was a Saturday; and, should he fail in obtaining the interview which he sought, his next chance would be on Monday. 'Call again on Monday,' from the watchman or porter left in charge, would be the merest commonplace rejoinder to a belated applicant; but, like so many other commonplace replies that we meet with in the world, it might be little short of a sentence of death to the hearer. Bertram's few pence and shillings would, he knew, last him but a very little time, when he should have to lay them out in payment for the cheapest accommodation that he could find in any decent, humble house of entertainment. And how if Mr Mervyn should not, on Monday, attend at the ship-building yard? Or how if his prayer to be employed should be declined, courteously, no doubt, but still declined?

Bertram began to feel, now, that he had been rash in rejecting the alluring invitations of the omnibus conductors, as their lengthy vehicles went rattling past. Fourpence—sixpence—would have been well bestowed in the saving of his waning strength. Overmuch fasting, voluntary or enforced, does tell upon the stamina. Bertram had stunted and pinched himself, prudently, during the sad weeks that had preceded the total breakdown of Groby, Sleather, and Studge; and now even Youth, with its wondrous powers of endurance, could hardly buoy him up. But his heart was a gallant one, and gallantly he pressed on. Should he be in time? Anxiously he looked about him, turning his weary head, for another omnibus, another pier where steamers called. He saw neither.

'Cab, gov'nor!' bawled out the ruffianly driver of a shabby cab, wearing on his unkempt head the battered white hat, with a rusty strip of black crape ostentatiously adorning it, which in London streets might be excusably considered as rather the distinctive headgear of a savage tribe, than

the outward and visible sign of Christian mourning for a deceased relative. 'Keb, I say!' reiterated this delectable charioteer, waving his whip. 'Blackwall, hain't it?'

'Yes; but I do not want a cab,' answered Bertram gently.

'That's because ye're so mean,' bellowed the cabman, who was three parts drunk. 'Eighteen-pence won't break ye, I should hope. Take you for a shilling,' added the driver, with growing exasperation, as he saw his offer tacitly refused. 'Very well; pad the hoof, you sneak!—And you, come up!' The last summons, backed by a succession of stinging whip-cuts, was addressed to his lean horse, whose welted neck and scored sides bore token to the spiteful humour of his brutal master; and off jolted the cab at a crazy canter.

Bertram Oakley pressed resolutely on. More ships, more wharfs. Would the wharfs and the ships, and the marine store shops, never end? Tired and giddy, as he rambled on, he marvelled at the black defaced dolls, with scrimp woolly locks, that dangled over the greasy doors of these frequent emporiums; and wondered how empty bottles, scraps of rusty iron, lead, pewter, copper, how old rags and fresh dripping, came to be called marine stores. More ships, and then locked-up yards full of enormous anchors, broken capstans, old masts, coiled-up cordage—the shattered paraphernalia of ships. It seemed a dream, this long walk. The mist from the river had risen breast-high, like a shroud. The gas was flaring in shed and shop; and cheap viands, saveleys, hot pies, greens, fried fish, and potatoes cooked and uncooked, were being higgled over by plain-spoken sellers and shrill, slipshod customers of the feminine sex, with noisy children at their untidy heels. Still on.

Yes; the short-lived day was pretty well spent, the long night of mid-winter had almost begun. Hideous old boardmen, sandwiched between a brace of placards in large print, and with paper lanterns stuck on the crown of their frowsy hats, patrolled the streets, hoarsely inviting all and sundry to some neighbouring music-hall. Behind the thin red curtains of low public-houses which sailors patronise, lights glared, and fiddles squeaked, and there was silly riot and vapid laughter, as Jack Ashore, true to the traditions of his hazardous calling, spent in asinine fashion the pounds he had worked for at sea. Brawling knots of half-intoxicated people hung about the corners of the darkling alleys, and the policemen on their beat kept well away from the entrances of courts and the approaches to slimy causeways leading to the river, and moved along cautiously, like scouts in a hostile country, in the midst of wild hootings, outcries, and snatches of ribald song, that gathered force as darkness fell.

This—this, at last, must be Blackwall. Yes; that was the pier, to the right, at which Bertram had landed when first he visited the place in his capacity of a messenger from Messrs Groby, Sleather, and Studge. He remembered the baker's shop that stood opposite; the tobacconist's, hard by, with the obsolete wooden figure of the Red Indian above the door, supposed to present an accurate portrait of some American savage in the costume of his native country; and the public-house, the *Blue Anchor*, that seemed to be frequented by watermen rather than by sailors from

the vessels near, to judge by the fresh-water mariners who puffed their churchwarden pipes in its porch and bow-windowed parlour. Bertram had an excellent memory for localities. It served to guide him on, without losing his way, until he saw, dimly, through the twilight, the words 'Mervyn & Co.' painted in tall letters on the white board that topped the gate of the well-remembered yard.

'Hilloa! heave to, or I'll know the reason why!' shouted a gruff voice, as Bertram set foot within the charmed precincts. The young man recognised the bark, so to speak, of the human watch-dog who guarded the place. 'I beg pardon; I have been here before,' he said with an effort to smile, as he halted. 'I hope I am in time to see Mr Mervyn?'

'What cheer, eh?' grumbled the janitor, bending his bullet-head forward to get a better look at the intruder.

'Is Mr Mervyn in his counting-house?' asked Bertram. 'If so, I want very much to see him for a moment.'

'Want must be your master, then, for he ain't,' was the surly response.

Bertram staggered. Weak and faint and ill, he had overtasked his waning strength to reach this place before business hours were over, never doubting that he should find the great ship-builder whom he sought. Curiously enough, although he had feared that Mr Mervyn—of the situation of whose private residence he knew nothing—might not attend at Blackwall on Monday, he had been all but certain of seeing him on Saturday, the hebdomadary half-holiday not having as yet become a parasitic British institution.

'Not here!' repeated Bertram, gasping, as he caught at the gate-post for support.

'Hasn't been here to-day, the Commodore,' said the veteran gate-keeper irritably. 'Have you got a letter? If so, leave it, and call for the answer.'

'No; I have no letter,' answered Bertram; 'but—'

'Then, sheer off, will ye, for I want to lock up the yard!' exclaimed the old sea-dragon, whose temper was on that evening shorter than usual. 'Monday, you can—' Why, what ails the youngster? he added, half-ashamed of his roughness, as Bertram, repulsed from the gate, reeled, and caught at the strong wooden paling beyond, and then sank down, a helpless heap on the ground. Five or six workmen, freshly released from the yard, and who were lighting their short black pipes before starting on their homeward walk, came crowding up.

'Drunk!' was the verdict of one of these jurors, with a loud laugh at his own perspicacity.

'No; I don't think it—the chap's ill,' said a more thoughtful member of the group.

'Who's ill?' asked a pleasant voice, the modulated accents of which contrasted with the monotonous bass of the shipwrights.

'Only this young fellow, Mr Arthur. He was talking to Old Joe here, at the gate, and down he drops.—How goes it, mate?' said the workman, putting his powerful hand on Bertram's shoulder. Bertram, with haggard eyes, looked up. He saw, standing by, a pleasant-faced, gentleman-like young man, of perhaps five-and-twenty, with blue eyes and fair hair, manly and kindly of aspect.



'Did you want anything of us, my poor fellow?' asked the new-comer good-naturedly. 'But of course you do, or you would not be here, weak as you are. I think you can scarcely, by your face, be a hand in search of work?'

'Mr Mervyn's kindness, sir, emboldened me.'

'You know my uncle, then?' asked the gentleman who had been addressed as Mr Arthur. 'How did that come about? I never, to the best of my recollection, saw you here.'

'I came here last autumn,' Bertram said feebly, 'with a letter from my then employers, Groby, Sleather, and'—

'Is your name—let me see—Bertram—yes, Bertram Oakley?' exclaimed Mr Mervyn's nephew with sudden interest. 'If so, I have heard my uncle speak more than once of — There! the poor fellow has fainted.—One of you men had better run for some wine—or better, brandy,' he added, putting some silver into the hand of one of the rough, good-natured shipwrights who started forward at his call. 'You can get it within a stone's-throw of the gate.'

Some brandy was speedily brought; and Bertram was with some difficulty induced to swallow a portion of the fiery spirit. 'I am sorry—to give so much trouble,' he said in a weak voice, as he reopened his dim eyes and tried to raise himself from the ground. 'You are very good, sir, to a stranger.'

'But you see, Mr Oakley, you are not quite a stranger to me,' said Mr Mervyn's nephew genially, as he assisted Bertram to rise. 'It is not often that our Principal takes such a fancy to any one, on a chance acquaintance, as he did to yourself; and it was but yesterday that he was expressing a hope that you had met with more appreciative employers, since Messrs Groby's bankruptcy, as you were evidently fit for better and higher things than to be one of their copyists. But you seem very weak. You are not ill?'

'It is fatigue, sir—not illness,' Bertram replied. 'I have been walking since the early morning, and was worn out and dejected enough, when, after many rebuffs, I bethought me that I would get so far as this, if my strength held out, and'—

'And seek aid from us? and employment?' said the other kindly, as Bertram hesitated to complete the sentence. 'For the second, I think I can venture to answer; and for the first, I know I can. It will be strange if there is nothing, no berth in Mervyn's Yard, or Yards, for we have branch establishments elsewhere, in which you would be useful. But this is Saturday night, and you cannot see the head of the firm until Monday. I must find you quarters somewhere near, in the meantime.—Ah, the *Greyhound*, the old *Greyhound* will be just the thing—cheap and quiet, and with a decent motherly old landlady, a tenant of my uncle's, by-the-by; so, if you are strong enough, I will walk round with you, and recommend Mrs Andrews to take all possible care of her lodger until, about eleven on Monday morning, you call at the yard.'

'I trespass sadly on your time, sir, and on your kindness,' said Bertram, almost with a sob, as he walked slowly on by the side of his new acquaintance. The generous treatment I have received here, so different from some of the greetings I

have had to-day, has almost unmanned me. And I was weak, somehow'—

'I can guess how. Lean on my arm, and we shall soon be at the *Greyhound's* door,' said Mr Arthur hastily.

On our side of the Channel, to express gratitude is a pain; to be thanked, still more distressing. Now, Alphonse and Jules, and Fritz and Max, are always ready to throw up their hands and beat their breasts, and fall on each other in a fraternal embrace, when some trifling service has been rendered on either part. But, if we islanders are less dramatically effusive, we are, I think, readier and more graceful, in our plain insular way, in adjusting the relative positions of the helped and the helper. 'I must introduce myself,' said Mr Mervyn's nephew. 'My name is Lynn—Arthur Lynn. I am a partner; and indeed,' added the young man cheerfully, 'I believe I represent the "Co." in our firm, since nobody else has an active share in it now except Mr Arthur Mervyn, who is my godfather as well as my uncle. And you have not poached on my time at all. People dine late in London, foolishly late, to my mind.—Here we are. This is the bar-parlour, where you can sit down while I speak a word to Mrs Andrews here.'

The word was soon spoken; and then Mr Arthur Lynn said good-night lightly and kindly, as it was in his nature to speak, and left Bertram Oakley in good hands.

## SELLS.

### IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

'PEOPLE who talk slang,' said the late Mortimer Collins, 'are those who either cannot or will not think; and there is no doubt that he is right. We have so many other contaminating influences creeping in daily and almost unavoidably to defile our 'well of English,' that the use of any gratuitous perversion of the language is certainly to be greatly deprecated. It nevertheless occasionally happens that such a word by common acceptance felicitously expresses the idea which it is intended to convey. 'Cheat, surprise, mistake, misadventure, *contretemps*'—none of these denotes so vividly as 'sell' that combination of circumstances resulting in discomfiture to some one. The following are a few examples of Sells proper, which, it must be borne in mind, are apart from that vulgar form of practical joking which is termed hoaxing.

A soldier, wishing to get his discharge, shamming deafness so successfully, that all the medical men who examined his case were deceived by him. No noise, however sudden or unexpected, had any power to disturb his equanimity; and he had acquired such perfect control over his nerves, that a pistol fired over his head when he was asleep did not—apparently—awake him. Grave suspicions as to the genuineness of his malady were entertained, notwithstanding. Like most malingerers, he was a little too clever and complete. Still, it seemed impossible to catch him tripping. A final examination was made; the doctors expressed themselves satisfied; and the soldier was presented with his certificate of discharge. Outside the door, he met a comrade, who whispered: 'Have you got it?' with an appearance

of eager interest. 'Yes; here it is!' was the unguarded reply. But the certificate, though filled in, was not signed, and the malingerer was a sold man.

Some time ago, a very amusing 'sell' was narrated in the pages of a magazine. A physician being summoned to attend a miser's wife in her last illness, declined to continue his visits unless he had some legal guarantee for payment, as he knew by experience the slippery character of the husband where pecuniary obligations were concerned. The miser thereupon drew up a document, formally promising, after haggling over the amount, that he would pay to Dr So-and-so the sum of L. —, 'if he cures my wife.'

'Stop!' said the doctor. 'I cannot undertake to do that. I will treat her to the best of my ability; but she is very ill, and I fear she will not recover.'

So the sentence was altered to, 'For attendance upon my wife, kill or cure,' the paper signed, and delivered over to the physician. His skill was unavailing, and the patient died; but when the bill came in, the widower quietly repudiated the debt *in toto*. In vain was it represented to him that the doctor held his legal acknowledgment; so the latter sued him for the amount in perfect confidence of gaining the day. The miser did not dispute the circumstances in court, but requested to see the document, which he then read aloud with great deliberation.

'And did you cure my wife, sir?' he asked, glancing over his spectacles at the plaintiff.

'No; that was impossible.'

'Did you kill her?'

Verdict for the defendant. Doctor sold.

An Irishman, finding his cash at a low ebb, resolved to adopt 'the road' as a professional means of refreshing the exchequer; and having provided himself with a huge horse-pistol, proceeded forthwith to the conventional 'lonely common,' and lay in wait. The no less conventional 'farmer returning from market with a bag of money' of course soon appeared, to whom enter Pat with the regulation highwayman offer of choice, 'Your money or your life!' a remark fortified by the simultaneous exhibition of the firearm in the usual way. The farmer, who was a Quaker, essayed to temporise. 'I would not have thee stain thy soul with sin, friend; and didst thou rob me of my gold, it would be theft; and didst thou kill me, it would be murder. But hold! A bargain is no sin, but a commerce between two honest men. I will give thee this bag of gold for the pistol which thou holdest at my ear.' The unsuspecting amateur Macheath, yielding perhaps to the Quaker's logic and solicitude for his spiritual welfare, made the exchange without a moment's hesitation. 'Now, friend,' cried the wily Ephraim, levelling the weapon, 'give me back my gold, or I'll blow thy brains out!' 'Blaze away, thin, darlint!' said Pat. 'Sure, there's niver a drop of powther in it!' The result was a sold Quaker.

The old sailing-ship yarn about the rollypoly pudding might come under this category. There was only one passenger on board the vessel, who took his meals in the after-cabin with the captain and mate, and who always suspected—not without

reason, it may be—that those two worthies defrauded him of his due share of the eatables when they got the chance. One day a jam pudding or rollypoly appeared at dinner, just enough for three; and the passenger, who had a sweet tooth, was instantly on the alert to see that he got his fair and proper third. 'Mr —, do you like puddin'-ends, sir?' the captain asked, with his knife poised in air ready to cut the delicacy. 'No; I do not like ends, sir,' replied the passenger, who considered that he had as much right to the middle slice as any one else. 'Ah, well, then, me and my mate does!' was the gallant commander's observation, as he cut the pudding in two and deposited half on the mate's plate, and half on his own.

At a large hotel in Suffolk, the not uncommon dilemma arose of there being only one room in the house vacant when two visitors required accommodation for the night. It was a double-bedded chamber, or was soon converted into such, and the two guests—who were both commercial travellers—agreed to share it. One of these gentlemen was a confirmed hypochondriac, and greatly alarmed his companion by waking him up in the middle of the night, gasping for breath. 'Asthma,' he panted out; 'I am subject to these spasmodic attacks. Open the window quickly; give me air!' Terrified beyond measure, the other jumped out of bed. But the room was pitch-dark; he had no matches, and he had forgotten the position of the window. 'For heaven's sake, be quick!' gasped the invalid. 'Give me more air, or I shall choke!' At length, by dint of groping wildly and upsetting half the furniture in the apartment, the window was found; but it was an old-fashioned casement, and no hasp or catch was to be discovered. 'Quick, quick; air, air!' implored the apparently dying man. 'Open it, break it, or I shall be suffocated!' Thus adjured, his friend lost no more time, but seizing a boot, smashed every pane; and the sufferer immediately experienced great relief. 'Oh, thank you; a thousand thanks. Ha!' he exclaimed, drawing deep sighs, which testified to the great comfort he derived; 'I think in another moment I should have been dead!' And when he had sufficiently recovered, and had expressed his heartfelt gratitude, he described the intense distress of these attacks, and the length of time he had suffered from them. After a while, both fell asleep again, devoutly thankful for the result. It was a warm summer night, and they felt no inconvenience from the broken window; but when daylight relieved the pitchy darkness of the night, the window was found to be still entire! Had invisible glaziers been at work already, or was the episode of the past night only a dream? No; for the floor was still strewn with the broken glass. Then, as they looked round the room in amazement, the solution of the mystery presented itself in the shape of an antiquated bookcase, whose latticed glass doors were a shattered wreck. The spasmodically attacked one was cured from that moment. So much for imagination!

Some years since, a wealthy eccentric old gentleman, living at the West End of London, devoted the whole of his large fortune to the purchase of a collection of rare and beautiful jewels; and the contemplation of these became his sole pleasure

and occupation in life. Leading a very lonely existence as he did, it is not to be wondered at that a natural fear of burglars deepened at last in his mind into a morbid dread of being robbed; and in terror lest he should be deprived of his treasure, he caused a small room to be built in his house wherein he might deposit his valuables; and being an ingenious man, he constructed and arranged in it a sort of *mitrailleuse* of pistols in such a way that whoever opened the door would receive a dozen bullets on the spot—a condition which might well appal the stoutest-hearted diamond-fancier that ever came out of Newgate. The arrangement was rendered harmless to the owner by the manipulation of a certain secret string, known only to himself. But alas! no sooner was the thing fairly completed, and in comfortable working order, than the string slipped from his fingers one day as he was closing the door, fell down inside, and from that moment his collection of precious stones was as inaccessible to himself as to any burglar alive! Seven years after this, he died, having spent the greater part of that interval in gazing sadly at the door which he himself had shut upon all he held dear on earth. A full account and explanation of the circumstances were found in his will, in which all his property was bequeathed to a married niece and her husband.

But all his property had been invested in those glittering crystals, and they were locked up behind that guardian door; and a battery of pistol-barrels is just as fatal to lawfully inheriting married nieces and their husbands as to feloniously acquisitive nocturnal visitors. What was to be done? After much deliberation, consultation, and investigation, the legatees came to the conclusion that there was nothing for it but to effect an entrance into the back of the closet through the wall of the next house. Here another difficulty occurred. The landlord of the adjoining residence objected to having his wall knocked down on any consideration. Well, then, would he sell the house? Yes; at a price. He was told to name his own terms; and probably did not understate the value of the premises. Be that as it may, the house was bought; and then came difficulty number three. The tenants then in possession had a large portion of their lease unexpired, and they too had objections to breakage. But it was not a time to stand on trifles, and money was 'no object' with such a fortune at hand, so they also were bought out on their own terms. Then the wall was breached, the treasure-chamber reached in safety, and found empty of all but a species of huge revolver—a deadly piece of mechanism, but of no great intrinsic value. Somebody else had been beforehand in getting through the wall!

The humour of the situations in many old comedies and farces depends upon 'sells' of some sort. Husbands make love to their own wives in disguise at masquerades; one individual hears his character disparaged in the third person by another, who has no idea whom he is addressing; or the villain unwittingly selects as his accomplice the man against whom his machinations are directed.

At the Queen's Theatre one night about ten years ago, during the representation of a play at which the writer was present, a burst of applause

rose from the audience as an actor made his entrance in the second scene. He was no celebrated artist or public favourite, but an ordinary 'walking-gentleman,' unknown to fame, who played one of the minor parts, and seemed a little puzzled—as well he might—to account for such an enthusiastic reception. There was no doubt about it, though; the house rang with plaudits from pit to gallery; so, thinking that the public had at last awakened to a perception of the merits of true genius, he stepped forward to the footlights before commencing to speak his part, and by bowing five or six times, expressed his thanks for such a flattering ovation. And then the house rang again, but now with laughter and ironical cheers; and the poor actor became aware that the Prince and Princess of Wales, who had just entered the royal box, were the real recipients of the greeting he had so gracefully acknowledged.

The three-card trick as played at fairs and on racecourses is familiar to many; it is so old, and its mystery so well known, that it is wonderful any one can still be found to be duped by it. The performer, who is seated on the ground, shows two cards in one hand, a court card below, and a plain one above; and another plain card in the other hand. The three are then thrown down backs uppermost in a row; but although the court card is apparently placed in the centre, it is absolutely impossible for the quickest eye to detect whether it or the plain card falls first, the latter slipping imperceptibly over the picture card. He then bets that no one can tell which of the three is the court card. Those who are in the secret could no more follow the action than the merest novice; and if, under these circumstances, one bets on the position of the court card, the odds are really two to one against him. If the trick ended here, it would be open to no greater objection than any other form of gambling, and there might even be something to admire in the dexterity exhibited by the prestidigitator. But, unfortunately, a swindling element is generally introduced. One, two, or more confederates—technically known as 'bonnets'—artfully made up as farmers, or 'swells,' or something as unlike the rough card-manipulator as possible, mingle with the crowd, and by a preconcerted signal, of course always hit upon the court card, and win large sums of money. Encouraged by the spectacle of their success, the public put their money on; but somehow the same luck does not seem to attend their ventures; they do not guess the right card; and after a time, the game flags again. Then the performer looks away for a moment, on some pretext or other; and while his head is turned, one of the 'bonnets' steps forward, slyly lifts the picture card, bends one corner of it, and replaces it. The card performer then addresses himself to his business again; he again lifts the cards and once more shuffles, and places them without taking any apparent notice of the bent card. There is accordingly a rush to bet on the card with the bent corner—which is the wrong one after all! When the operator picked up the cards to throw them again in position, he rapidly and invisibly straightened the turned-up corner of the court card with his thumb, and at the same time bent one of the plain ones. So much for the

three-card trick as usually performed, and concerning which I trust my young friends may be strenuously on their guard.

Now, let me explain a special modification of it which I once saw on the towing-path at Putney, on one of the practice-days before the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, and which involved a really very pretty bit of sleight-of-hand. The ordinary *modus operandi* had been carried out; the regular business of lucky confederates, corner-bending, and all the rest of it, was gone through; but somehow the bystanders who formed the circle seemed too wary to be trapped by such chaff as that, and neither the 'farmer's' lingo nor the manipulator's assumed carelessness induced any of the amateurs to tempt fortune. 'Won't any o' you gents behind try yer luck?' said the squatting performer, negligently dropping the cards and turning round, whereupon the honest agriculturist immediately lifted the middle one so that all could see it was the court card, and replaced it face downwards as before. 'I puts vive pund on thot keerd,' exclaimed the farmer, 'if you doan't touch it agen!' Others would stake money on it too, on those conditions, which the performer did not seem inclined to accept. At last, however, after much demur, he agreed; a considerable sum was bet; the card—which he had not touched—was turned over, and was *not* the court card! A loud murmur arose from the dupes; cries of 'Duck him!' were heard, and for some moments the swindler's personal safety was endangered. But he turned the tide of popular opinion in his favour by appealing to the justice of the crowd. 'They tried to cheat me,' he shouted; 'they took advantage of me when my face was turned away; they'd have done me if they could, and now they goes for me when they finds themselves done instead. They tried to be rogues, and took me for a fool; but if there's bigger rogues than they, there's bigger fools than me!'

Such logic was irresistible. But how was the card so adroitly changed? The guileless farmer—who disappeared directly the row began—must have had a plain card in his hand when he stepped forward, which he exchanged for the court card as he put the latter down, by the process known among conjurers as double-palming. It was the neatest thing I ever saw, and the amateurs were decidedly, and very properly, sold.

The following anecdote is related as having actually occurred not many months ago in a large northern seaport city in England; and we have no reason to disbelieve it.

It was a Sunday, and it was raining as it never does rain but in the vicinity of mercantile shipping on the first day of the week. The docks boasted a little church or Bethel, which hoisted the Union-jack every Sunday morning, in token that service would be held there, chiefly for sailors. The clergyman who officiated weekly at the Bethel happened to be rather later than usual on the Sunday morning in question, owing to the difficulty he had in getting a cab, the rain having caused those vehicles to be in great demand. He arrived, however, a few minutes before eleven, and hurriedly bidding the driver wait for him till service should be over, he entered the sacred edifice—to find himself alone there. Possibly, sea-

faring people are not more prone to church-going in wet weather than their fellow-sinners who live ashore; anyhow, every seat was vacant. The clergyman was a zealous man, so he resolved to wait a quarter of an hour, on the chance of some waif or stray turning up. His patience was not unrewarded; for after the lapse of a few minutes, one very wet man came slowly in, and seated himself with some hesitation on one of the back benches. Even he, probably, had only put into that haven under stress of bad weather outside, all the public-houses and other congenial places of shelter being closed. Now, our parson was not only a zealous but a conscientious man—not always the same thing—and he resolved that had he but one solitary unit instead of a congregation, he would pursue the service in full to the bitter end for that unit's benefit—at least, as long as the unit would bear it—and he proceeded to do so, and accomplished it. At the end of the liturgy, touched probably by the patient endurance of his auditor, he condescended to address him personally, telling him that since the inclemency of the weather—we are not in receipt of information on the point, but we feel sure he said inclemency—had prevented the usual attendance at the church, he would forego the sermon he had prepared, and would content himself with making a 'few remarks.' This, however, his hearer begged him not to do, and expressed a great desire to hear the sermon; so, pleased with this evidence of intelligence among the lower orders, and gratified by the effect his eloquence was producing, he took the victim at his word, and let him have it. The text duly chosen, blossomed into firstly, secondly, thirdly, fourthly, and lastly; 'in conclusion' was followed by 'one word more,' and still the unit sat on undismayed. After it was all over, the preacher came down and shook hands with him, thanking him warmly for his attention; his gratification being somewhat diminished when he discovered the enraptured listener to be *his cabman*, the sum-total of whose 'half-a-crown an hour for waiting' had been materially augmented by the length of the worthy divine's discourse.

## BUSINESS AND MATRIMONY.

BY A SOLICITOR.

I HAVE had a bad day of it—a bad, unsatisfactory, tiresome, wearing day. Things have gone wrong with me. I have been snappish and unreasonable with my clerks. My relations with my partner, usually working without friction, have jarred disagreeably. I have made several stupid mistakes, and generally mismanaged my business. Heart and head have alike ached. My digestion has been upset, and lunch has disagreed with me. I have successively lost three pens, my blue pencil, my red ink, my india-rubber, the second volume of Pridaux' *Precedents of Conveyancing*, the statement of claim in *Brakelegge and Wife v. the Accidental Railway Company*, and my receipt stamps. These several articles have been restored to me by a trembling clerk from various corners of the office where I have myself at sundry times deposited them. I have inked myself and my linen until soap is



a mockery and pumice-stone a delusion. I have been of no advantage or profit to myself, my clients, or any one connected with me.

Has any great misfortune in business or society come upon me? Is there a bill due to-morrow which I cannot meet? Are my clients falling away? Did I sup last night on pork-chops, Welsh-rabbit, lobster, or pickled salmon? Nothing of the kind. The simple explanation of all my woes is, that at the conclusion of breakfast, and just before I left home, I had a quarrel with my wife.

It was nothing—a storm in a teacup, or rather in a coffee-cup, as usual. About ten inches by three of the above exhilarating but penetrant fluid on the clean white table-cloth. A little natural indignation on the part of the mistress at the blemishing of her otherwise spotless napery, accompanied by a few observations, better left alone, about stupidity, awkwardness, and the like. A quick and slightly sarcastic retort, delivered in my best manner. An angry and rather rude rejoinder from the wife. A decided but harsh set-down from the husband, and the mischief was done. Words were spoken—foolish, unreasoning words—which were none the less bruising and damaging that each of the parties would afterwards be perfectly well aware that the other 'didn't mean what he' or she 'said.' There was brutal, blind wrath on the man's side; there were bitter reproaches and cutting insinuations on the woman's. You understand the whole silly business.

I have conquered, of course. Am I not a man? Is it not my right to rule? Shall I not be 'master in my own house?' Shall I 'submit to be addressed in that tone?' And so forth. Yes, I soothly flatter myself, coward that I am, that I have made her say she was sorry, and beg my pardon. Having asserted what I call my marital dignity, I grant easy terms, and peace is signed with tears and kisses. Having missed two trains and an important appointment, I stride forth from my home, victor in the domestic battle. And I have the satisfaction of seeing looking after me a white and sorrowful little face, with the semblance of a tearful but all loving smile struggling to be visible, instead of the laughing look and merry nod which usually speed me on my way into the fight for existence.

And all day long the victory has recoiled upon the victor, and I may say, with the great captain of old, that many such successes would cost me—I do not care to think what. How will she bear the long day in the dull childless house, with the remembrance of her husband's harsh voice and angry words? Will such enlivening distractions as the whirring passage of the butcher's cart—the mechanical melody of the stray Savoyard, tempted for his sins into that unremunerative suburb—or the hoarse summons of the milkman demanding admission for his misnamed fluid, be sufficient to chase the gloom from her brow and the heaviness from her heart? It is to be feared not. But then, she was clearly wrong. She had not any business to go losing her temper because I accidentally upset my coffee, and say I was stupid and awkward. Of course I was quite

right to let her see plainly that I would not stand such nonsense. Equally, of course, I only spoke to her like that, for her own good. It is better for her to suffer—as I know she is suffering now—because it will conduce hereafter to her happiness, by establishing firmly in her mind a proper understanding of our mutual relations. And finally, it is all nonsense, and there will never be any peace in the house if I am always to—

I am afraid that last sentence conveys the most correct notion of my state of mind at the time. Did I go quite the right way to work? Was I entirely actuated by the laudable and conscientious motives above set forth? Was there no rudeness and bitterness, no want of consideration—how about that little headache with which she got up!—no self-conceit or stubbornness on *my* side? I am a hard-headed, hard-fisted man of business, rugged and roughened from incessant contact with the asperities of life. My wife—in confidence, reader, she is much younger than I—is a sensitive girl, accustomed from her childhood to be admired and petted; a woman devoted to her husband, and loving him so much, that every hasty word he utters is to her as a cruel stab—a love which might surely excuse a little constitutional hastiness of temper. Could I not have borne the momentary irritation, and thereafter, at a more fitting season, have spoken gently a few words of loving remonstrance, which would have left behind them no sore feeling on either side; instead of 'carrying on' ridiculously, stamping my foot, and smiting my fist—to its detriment—against the furniture? Whereas, I can now only feel that I have done that which is a mistake both in social economy, in mechanics, and in law—that I have used more force than was necessary.

Now, I am going to suppose a case such as I know to be that of very many as I write—that is, the case of a young man of business, newly married, as yet without children, and with just sufficient means to maintain a small house in a suburb at some distance from his place of business, and without the means of keeping up a circle of acquaintance; so that he and his wife are sojourners and strangers in the land where they dwell, dependent entirely upon one another for company and comfort in their own nest.

Do not, I say to such a one—assuming that you and your wife love one another—begin the day by a quarrel with her. If you must quarrel—and I am afraid that, however devoted to one another, you will have your occasional tiffs—put it off until you come home. Then—a night intervening—there will be time for the consequent soreness to wear off. But if you value your happiness and peace of mind, and the unconscious digestion of your meals consequent thereon—if you have any desire that the long hours without you shall not be to your wife duller and more cheerless than is inevitable, do not found your day upon a matrimonial disagreement. You, remember, are going to your business, to do battle against the grim wolf which is ever hungrily watching your door, and your capabilities will be by no means improved by the consciousness that you have left unhappiness where you would wish all to be happiness and peace. But you, at all events, will have something to distract your mind, to keep you from inordinate brooding. What will *she* have? Her household duties, you will say—her work, her

walk out, her book. Alas! these want the varied and interesting character of the business which occupies *your* day. They are too mechanical; they run in too unvarying a groove to take from her the mental leisure which she will infallibly employ in eating her heart over your cruel words and looks.

Business men for the most part have no idea, or rather forget to remember, how lonely a life is often led by their wives in the early days of married life. When the young ones have arrived, when prosperity has brought with it its increased social duties, this evil will have vanished. But at first, into what sort of an existence do you imagine, my friend, you have introduced a young and inexperienced girl who has been induced by the contemplation of your many mental and bodily excellences to forsake, it may be, the snug companionship and merry prattle of a family of brothers and sisters? Do you not feel that her ears must ache with the deafening silence of the house, that the longing for an occasional loving word or pleasant smile, for a sympathetic ear into which to pour her little prattle of household events—anent the turpitude of the cat, the doubt as to the success of a novel pudding, the stupidity of the servant, the possible becomingness of a contemplated cap—that this longing must weigh very heavily sometimes upon the girl you leave behind you? Do not, then, give her for a companion in the dreary house, and the solitary walk which constitutes her recreation, the image of yourself with a black frown and a stern eye, and sarcastic or angry words upon your lips.

The advantages of what I will call the 'sub-urban system' are few, and its evils, as it affects matrimony, are many. In the old times, before gigantic trade and overwhelming population made every foot of the essentially 'business' quarter of the town more precious than gold itself, the merchant-prince or the wealthy banker lived over his premises; and over the same he not unfrequently entertained royalty. Now, it is only the doctor who does this; and even he also has often his consulting rooms at a distance. Then, the husband and father was always on the spot, and within call of his wife and family; now, he is scarcely anything but a lodger, spending the greater part of his life away from them, and his home is little more to him than a place wherein to sleep. No doubt it is good for him to disconnect himself entirely from his work at the close of business hours, and to surround himself with entirely fresh scenes and interests. Perhaps, if he lives fairly out of town, the change to a purer air may be a benefit. He may derive health from the exercise which he takes in going to and returning from his office or chambers, and which otherwise he might neglect. But having said this, we have said all, or almost all.

If there be no family, but only the husband and wife, then the wife will be dull and lonely, nine times out of ten, in the empty house without her husband. She might not, truly, see much of him, even if his business were carried on at home. But the knowledge of his being there would be sufficient—an occasional glimpse of him would satisfy her. If, on the contrary, she be fond of society, and have many friends, the case will not be much improved. She will not be dull and wretched, no doubt; but then she will probably

be a gadabout. If she be not herself a gadabout, gadabouts will call on her, interrupt her household duties, and possibly endeavour to induce her to rebel against her husband. Man is the salt, the condiment without which the otherwise delicious compound called Woman speedily becomes rancid and unprofitable.

We shall not go back again to live over our shops. But against these evils there is happily provided a remedy simple and old-fashioned, but sure, certain, and palatable. It is called Love. And this same Love, if it be strong enough to 'make the world go round,' as the song says it is, will be also strong enough to make every man's own peculiar little globe revolve without friction. If the husband is obliged to spend a third of his life away from those he loves, let him be careful always to be with them as a kindly and pleasant remembrance. Let the wife take heed that her welcoming face shall be ever as the evening sun after a stormy day, chasing away from her husband's life the overhanging clouds, and lulling to rest the winds that have roared around him. Let each give the other cause to regard those hours when they are together, as a retirement into a shady and pleasant garden, where for both is to be found rest from all labours and troubles. So shall they still be near the one to the other, though they be apart; and so shall the sweet spirit of home be upon them both, making the rough highway of life smoother for the man, and cheering and enlivening for the woman its quiet and uneventful by-paths.

## THE STRANGE STORY OF EUGENIA.

### CHAPTER I.—STORNHEIM.

TWENTY years ago, I was sent from London with despatches to the court of the reigning Prince of Blankenwald. His Serene Highness received me with all courtesy; but the object of my mission was delayed in its attainment by the illness of his Prime-Minister, the Graf von Stornheim, without whom the Prince would do nothing. Weeks dragged on, and I received some sharp letters from the Foreign Office. On venturing a respectful remonstrance to His Serene Highness, he sent me to the country-house of the Prime-Minister with the necessary papers and full authority to act in concert with him. Two hours' drive from the capital brought me to Stornheim. The Graf's house was a large one—more comfortable than splendid in appearance, and situated in noble extensive grounds. On my arrival, I was at once ushered into the presence of that dignitary. He had left his bed for the first time for many days, in order to receive me; but was unable to rise from a day-couch, where he was half-sitting, half-lying, after a recent torturing fit of gout. After the perusal of some papers, and a few minutes' talk, he begged me to leave them in his hands, to look over more minutely, and in the meantime to take some rest and refreshment. He was compelled, he said, smiling, to hand me over to the care of his wife, who was fond of my country-people, and was never so pleased as with an opportunity of returning the kindness she had received during a visit to England.

After a change of dress, which my journey had rendered necessary, I was conducted into a reception-room, where several ladies were seated. The eldest, Madame von Stornheim, advanced to meet me, and with a mixture of kindness and dignity, apologised for receiving me quite *en famille*. Her husband's illness had, she said, driven all their late visitors away, and they had had no time to collect others to meet me. There was, I thought, in this speech, kindly as it was said, a pretty clear hint that the presence of strangers was not desirable at Stornheim, and that I should not be expected to linger when my business was accomplished. I of course only noticed the agreeable part of the speech, and replied that such an apology was quite uncalled for, expressing a pleasure in finding myself in so charming a family group. The Gräfin and her three daughters were all tall, handsome women, in the German style, that is to say, with splendid fair complexions, and features and figures good, though somewhat heavy. She introduced a fourth lady as a niece of her husband's, the Gräfin Eugenia von Oberthal. In the last-named lady I immediately felt a strong interest. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, and a complete contrast to her cousins. Slender and elegant in figure, she had a delicate oval face, perfectly regular features, a brilliant brunette complexion, and silky dark hair.

Dinner was shortly announced; and during that meal I quickly became acquainted with my fair companions. Like most German women, they were accomplished linguists, and challenged me to talk with them in English, French, or Italian as I chose. Eugenia von Oberthal was the most silent; but when she spoke, I was struck with the judgment and sense of her remarks; or perhaps her singular beauty had predisposed me to be favourably impressed.

Before night fell, I had another interview with Graf von Stornheim. The precision and clearness of his views, and the mastery he had already obtained over the difficulties that had beset my mission, convinced me that he had not unjustly acquired the reputation of being one of the ablest men of his time. But I was not sorry that even his skill and influence could not prevent the accomplishment of my mission from taking some weeks to perform, and that he begged me to take up my abode at Stornheim until the end was attained.

It is not necessary for the telling of my story to allude again to my diplomatic labours. It is sufficient to say I was detained, not unwillingly, late into the autumn at Stornheim. Shooting-parties were organised in my honour, and walking and riding excursions were of frequent occurrence. Eugenia von Oberthal—*die schöne Gräfin*, as she was usually called—never joined these parties, nor could I recollect that she had once accompanied us out of the park. On my remarking her home-keeping habits, she calmly replied that she preferred staying with the children. Another peculiarity I observed in her was, that though always well dressed, and with a taste and elegance in which German women are generally strikingly deficient, she had always a cord round her beautiful throat, with the free end hanging down in front. It was precisely and most uncomfortably like the fatal noose with which Jack Ketch invests his patients. On one occasion, when our acquaint-

ance was far enough advanced for me to venture on a joke, I rallied her on the simplicity of her taste, and the plainness of the necklace she had chosen. A sudden silence fell on the company; one cousin became deeply interested in a photographic album; two walked away into the conservatory; and Madame von Stornheim, with an evident effort, began talking of some widely foreign matter. My curiosity was now piqued, and I determined to learn all I could about *die schöne Gräfin*. With this view, I tried to pump a younger son of Graf von Stornheim, who had returned from college. But I heard little from him that I had not already learned. Eugenia was a widow; though only three-and-twenty, her husband had been dead two years, leaving her with an infant, who died shortly after its father.

'Were her habits of seclusion consequent upon grief for the loss of her husband and child?' I asked.

'Probably,' was the dry reply.

'And the cord she wears round her neck, is it the insignia of some religious order?'

'What do I know? Women are fanciful, especially young and pretty ones.' And the young fellow puffed away at his cigar, with an air that seemed to say he had dismissed the subject.

I had been for some time aware that I was smitten with Eugenia, and I was now anxious to learn if my feelings were reciprocated. She seemed pleased in my society, and talked freely and readily with me. But she was too frank, too unembarrassed for love. Here again, I was thrown into doubt. This unreserve seemed a part of her character. I had never met a woman of her culture and station so direct and almost abrupt in speech and action. Circumlocution and hesitation seemed unknown to her. Her refined beauty and softness of voice and manner made her actions and words irresistibly pleasing. But when you recalled them in her absence, and the charm of her person and manner was wanting, you felt pained and offended by the recollection of something bordering on rusticity and bluntness. The longer I thought, the more undecided and irritated I became. The discomfort was insupportable; and one morning I determined to put an end to my doubts in the only effectual way. It was a morning of which every trifling incident is engraved on my memory with painful clearness. I had risen early, and thrown open my bedroom window to admit the fresh morning air. The suite of rooms assigned me at Stornheim looked out upon a noble terrace, from which you commanded a view many miles round of a varied and densely wooded country. But beautiful as was the scene, my eyes were quickly withdrawn to one more beautiful still. The cheerful sound of Eugenia's voice, and the shouts and laughter of a childish one, made me turn my eyes from the landscape and look upon the terrace. There was Eugenia running at full speed, carrying a child of five years—a grandson of the Graf's and a great favourite—pickaback. She flew like an arrow along the terrace, her little burden evidently in high delight. He had got hold of the hateful rope, and was pulling at it, imitating the sound by which we encourage a horse to full speed. 'You hurt me, Carl—you hurt me,' cried she in vain. Then falling on her knees so as to bring

the child's feet near the ground, she put him down, and with both hands loosened the rope, which had become taut with the child's pulling at it. While in this position, she looked up and saw me at the window; and nodding a cheerful good morning, took the child up again and darted away out of my sight.

Something in this scene, momentary as it was, inexpressibly shocked me. That hideous rope suggested thoughts so incongruous with the freshness, beauty, and grace of her who bore it! 'Was it, as the young Von Stornheim had suggested, worn for a whim, or was it inflicted as a penance for some?'—I could not finish the sentence. Crime and sin were impossible to such a creature; it was profanity to associate such ideas with her. I recalled all I knew of her—the strong affection of her cousins; the innocence and usefulness of her daily life; her popularity with the children, to whom she devoted many hours of her day, playing with them, teaching them, and often nursing them. While thus thinking, I unconsciously made my way down-stairs, and through a door on to the terrace.

Eugenia was now returning, leading her little companion by the hand. Flushed with exercise, her eyes sparkling, her hair blowing about her face, and laughing with almost childish glee, her beauty struck me as of an unearthly perfection. A certain sense of humility, a feeling that I was presumptuous to entertain the thought of her as a wife, kept me for a moment silent. But such feelings do not last long with a lover, and quickly shaking them off, I gave her the usual morning greeting.

'It wants some time to the breakfast hour,' said I; 'will you walk a little way?'

'Certainly,' she replied simply.

'I have been a long time looking for an opportunity of speaking to you on a subject of the greatest interest—to me—at least,' I began.

'I know,' she said as coolly as before.

I did not like this. I do not believe any man likes to be anticipated in an offer of his hand, and I was disconcerted.

'May I hope, then,' I went on, 'that if you know the request I am about to make, you will grant it?'

'You mean to ask me to marry you. I cannot marry any one.'

'Yet you have been married?'

'Yes; but I must remain a widow till my death.'

'May I know the reason of your decision?'

'It is no decision of mine—it has been decided for me. Besides, if you knew my history, you would not wish to marry me.'

'Is it—is it?—I hesitated—'anything to do with this?' and I touched the frayed rope that encircled her neck.

'It is,' she answered.—'We will now go in to breakfast; and afterwards, I will tell you about it;' and we walked back into the house without exchanging a word.

The reader will have thought I made but a tame appearance in the foregoing scene; and I cannot describe the chilling and deadening effect of Eugenia's calm commonplace words, and still more of her emotionless manner. I was prepared to speak with all the passion I felt; but an application of ice-cold water could not have more

thoroughly benumbed me. I was, moreover, intensely mortified to observe that she ate a good breakfast, talked gaily, and included me in the conversation. I was disgusted and angry, and hastily determined to dismiss her from my mind as thoroughly heartless.

That day and the next passed away without the promised explanation. In fact, I was mortified and sulky, and avoided her as much as possible. On the third day, a singular incident occurred, which painfully renewed all my interest in Eugenia. I was walking down a corridor leading to my rooms, when a door opened, and I perceived Madame von Stornheim slowly coming up a small staircase I had never before noticed, with her handkerchief pressed to her face. Out of respect, I paused in my walk, and observed a man, plainly dressed in black, following her. Where had I before seen him? His face was familiar to me, and brought back some painful association. I stood motionless in horror and surprise. He was the public executioner! He had been pointed out to me in the street at B—. Madame von Stornheim passed on, her head bowed, her face still hidden, followed by her hateful companion, and apparently unconscious of my presence. The mysterious pair stopped at the door of what I knew to be Eugenia's room. They walked in; the door closed behind them. I heard a faint sound of hysterical weeping, and roused to a sense of the indelicacy of my position, I walked away.

Eugenia appeared at dinner, cheerful and unconcerned as ever. Madame von Stornheim was absent on a plea of headache. She came into the saloon in the evening, however, very pale, and in evident suffering. She exerted herself to appear as usual; but in the midst of an animated conversation, I saw her turn deadly white. She rose, tried to reach the door, but suddenly swayed, and fell heavily to the ground. Eugenia ran to her, and reached her before either of her daughters, and with the assistance of an attendant, carried her out of the room.

That night was passed by me in a conflict of mind I cannot describe. My love for Eugenia had received a violent shock; but my interest in her remained undiminished—was indeed heightened by the mysterious circumstances I have described. My feeling of irritation against her was for the time overcome, or rather lulled by my curiosity; and after several hours of feverish agitation, I fell asleep, having resolved to claim the promised explanation from Eugenia in the morning.

It was the custom at Stornheim to serve breakfast in a large room for those who chose to take that meal in company. In compliment to me, most of the family had, since my appearance, adopted the English plan. On this occasion, however, the members of the family took their breakfast in their own rooms. I therefore found myself alone. After a pretence at a meal, I sent a footman to the Gräfin von Oberthal, asking her to give me a few minutes' conversation. He returned immediately, with the answer that the Gräfin would see me at once. He led the way to Eugenia's sitting-room, and knocking at the door, opened it. I walked in, and found myself in the presence of my living enigma. She was standing, scissors in hand, her graceful head slightly on one side, before a large table. Yards upon yards of coarse flannel were



spread out before her; a pattern was pinned on the end nearest to her, and she seemed rapt in consideration of how to cut it to the best advantage.

One of the most pleasing characteristics of Eugenia was her active charity. She never visited the poor, but had a kind of levee of her poverty-stricken protégées once a week. Money, clothes, and advice were dispensed by her with singular good sense and judgment; and she employed an old servant as a kind of almoner to visit those who could not leave their homes. I had been for some time aware of these facts, and they added not a little to the confusion of my ideas respecting her.

After the usual salutations, she abandoned her cutting out, as too noisy an employment, and taking up a garment already shaped, began sewing it with rapid and skilful fingers. Her appearance that morning was very striking. She had on a morning robe of rose-coloured cashmere, trimmed with black lace; a rich ribbon of the same colour as the robe, and mixed with black lace, was twisted in her hair, and fell on one shoulder, setting off her magnificent locks. Behind her was an open window, showing branches of vine swaying in a gentle breeze. Vases of flowers were about the room, and on the open piano stood my favourite song, *Who is Sylvia?* All about her betokened peaceful, womanly existence. My horrible doubts and conjectures vanished, and I was just about to make a passionate speech, when that fatal noose, partly concealed in the ample folds of her robe, caught my sight, and again chilled me.

'Eugenia,' I began, 'that there is some terrible secret connected with you, I am compelled to believe. But I cannot think it is anything disgraceful—anything that should prevent your becoming the wife of an honest man. Eugenia, be my wife! If the mystery that clings to you brings sorrow and trouble with it, let me share it. I have a sufficient fortune. If you prefer a life of seclusion, I will give up my profession, and we will retire to some quiet part of the world—anywhere you like.'

'I am not allowed to leave Germany; I am not allowed even to leave Sornheim. I am not allowed to marry. I told you so.'

'But why? You are over age. You have not joined any religious order?'

'No. I am undergoing a punishment.'

'A punishment! For what? What can you, so amiable, so gentle, have done, to merit such a death in life as you describe?'

'What I have done, the world calls a crime. I do not. I am ready to tell you the circumstances. I do not even ask you to keep it a secret. It is indifferent to me.'

That which follows was not told me at once, but in two conversations. But I give it as nearly as I can, in the form of a connected narrative, omitting the questions which I put from time to time.

#### CHAPTER II.—EUGENIA'S HISTORY.

I am an only child. My mother was by birth an Italian, but was brought to Germany at an early age, and married very young. Ever since I can recollect, there was a singular coldness in her manner to my father. For what reason I do not know, for he was one of the best of men. He appeared to worship her; and never, until one day, relaxed

in his efforts to win her affections. On the day to which I have alluded—when I was about eight years old—my mother seemed in a somewhat better temper; she was talking cheerfully, and looked up at my father with an unusual smile. He, delighted, bent over her, and taking her hand, kissed it warmly. She rose up fiercely, struck him with her clenched hand, and hurried from the room. My father, a man of unusual height and strength, staggered back some paces, and then stood as if turned to stone, his teeth set, his face rigid and white. He remained thus, with his eyes fixed on the ground, for some minutes, until I, thinking he was ill, went up to him and tried to reach his hand. He started, caught me up, and in a broken voice, called me his own Eugenia, his darling, the one comfort God had given him, again and again. From that day, we were nearly inseparable. He took the sole care of my education; and in order to lose as little as possible of my company, instructed me in all the athletic exercises possible to my sex and age. He made me an expert fencer and shot. I always rode with him to the chase; and accompanied him in long walks. But he was watchful for the first sign of fatigue; and our walks generally ended by his carrying me home.

Our country existence was, however, suddenly ended by a summons from the reigning Prince, who gave my father an appointment which compelled his residence in the capital. My mother was clearly nothing loath to avail herself of the opportunity thus afforded her of appearing at all the court balls and receptions. Her great beauty attracted universal admiration, and she was pleased with the sensation she created, though she always preserved a cold and haughty manner. Her warmest admirer was an Oberst von Halden, a rival and political opponent of my father's. He was, moreover, jealous of my father's influence with the Prince, and tried to undermine him in every way. His admiration for my mother at last took the form of persecution. She could not move out of doors without his following her; and at every reception at our house he was present. My mother did not conceal her irritation and dislike of his attentions; and gave strict orders that he should not be admitted. He bribed our servants, no doubt, for he continued his visits. On one occasion I was surprised by hearing high voices in my mother's boudoir. I looked in, and saw her standing with one hand grasping the bell-rope, and the other signing him to leave the room. He looked confused and angry, and obeyed her imperious gesture, saying: 'You shall pay for your insolence, Madame, and that shortly.'

I afterwards learned that he set himself in the most deliberate manner to annoy and provoke my father, whose perfect command of temper for some time baffled him. At last, a gross insult, in the presence of a large party, left my father no alternative but a duel, the result of which was that my beloved parent fell, shot through the heart!

An unaccountable change in my mother's sentiments now occurred. Had she been the most affectionate of wives, instead of torturing her husband for years, she could not have shown more grief at his death. She raved, and conducted herself in such a manner, that it was thought unsafe to leave her alone; and a watch was set over her night and day for some time. At last she fell

into a settled melancholy, always repeating the words: 'Had I but had a son to avenge him!' One day I said to her: 'Mamma, I am but a girl; but I promise you I will avenge my father's death.' She changed towards me from that moment, and seemed to cling to me as my dear father had previously. She made me repeat my promise daily, and dwelt with delight on my words. She languished and died at the end of a year. Her last words to me were: 'Do not forget.'

#### A WORD OR TWO ABOUT ROSE-BEES.

BY A YOUTHFUL OBSERVER.

HAVING seen in Professor Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera* for April 1875 some interesting remarks about Rose-bees, I decided to avail myself of any opportunity that offered itself for discovering the haunts of these interesting little creatures, that I might note their habits. Being at Silloth—a small watering-place on the south coast of the Solway—in the midsummer of the same year, and being unable to walk about, I was wont to sit on some sand-hills which overlook the sea, to inhale the invigorating breezes, and watch the cloud-shadows as they chased each other over the broad breast of the neighbouring Criffel. As I sat one day on these sand-hills, thus occupied, a peaceful calm filling the air, and all things silent but for the rippling of the waves and the merry ring of children's voices, my attention was arrested by the hum of a bee; and looking round, I was delighted to see one near me busily engaged in burrowing in the sand. Having always been interested in all kinds of natural history objects, and, by previous reading having obtained the knowledge that rose-bees build their nests in the sand, soil, and other places of like nature, I concluded that the wished-for opportunity had come; and upon closer observation, I found that there were several nests near the spot, in nearly every stage of construction, from the excavation of the hole to the filling up thereof with rose-leaves and pollen, and quite a colony of rose-bees at work. From that time the nests and bees were watched every day for fresh facts, and the following is the result of my observations.

If we follow the bee from the time of its nest-building in June, we find that the spot selected is free from the roots of grass and heather, which might interfere with its work. It settles down on an apparently suitable place—usually on a sloping part of a sand-hill, and on the side most sheltered from the weather—and begins to clear away the sand. It then scratches away the upper layer of sand, which is of course dry with the heat of the sun, and constructs a small hole about a quarter of an inch in diameter, burrowing exactly like a rabbit. Running into its tunnel, it gathers a small heap of sand, which it gradually moves outwards—itsself moving backwards—and finally pushes it back with its feet, till the sand forms a small conical hillock in front of the hole.

As soon as it has formed a tunnel about eight inches deep, it flies off in search of leaves. It does not confine itself to rose-leaves exclusively, but occasionally uses those of the laburnum, convolvulus, and French bean; though the rose-leaf is its favourite material, possibly owing to the serrations on their edges helping to bind them

together. A rose-tree in this instance was discovered about fifty yards from the burrows, where a number of the busy creatures were at work clipping away to their hearts' content. The bee does not take the whole leaf, but, hovering about till it finds one suitable, settles down and begins to cut. The pieces it cuts are of two different shapes—oblong pieces, about half an inch long and from a quarter to three-eighths of an inch broad, for the body of the cell; and small round pieces for the bottom and top. Having settled on the leaf, it begins to cut at the edge, and, with its right legs on one side and its left on the other, clips it in a curve of a parabolic or circular shape, according to its requirements. When cutting, it sometimes, though very seldom, crosses the mid-rib. To still maintain its balance when about to sever the leaf—as it is practically sawing off the end on which it is resting—its wings vibrate, and finally it flies off to its nest with the severed portion of the leaf curved up under its body, stopping often on its way to gather energy for a second flight.

Having arrived at its hole with its leaf, the bee draws it in, carefully arranging it, and with others—twelve in all, as I eventually found—forms the body of the cell. When it has got thus far in the construction of a cell, it flies in search of pollen and honey, which, converted into a paste, becomes the food of its future progeny. On this it lays an egg, and above all places the lid or lids—for it covers the egg with three separate circular pieces of rose-leaf; and in this fashion it builds seven or eight cells, the last so constructed that the lid fits exactly to the top of the cell. I took away some of these cells, and placed them in a greenhouse, to see if a new colony could be raised; but on looking a short time afterwards, I found, to my sorrow, that some snails had eaten them up, leaves, pollen and all.

One mysterious insect I have noticed hovering about the nests of these bees. It is like a rose-bee, but darker coloured, and about the same size. What is its duty? Is it a parasite? or is it an insect-pirate that comes to rob the bee of its honey or pollen? This seems the most reasonable conclusion; for it attacks the bee near the nest, flying back and forward over the holes until one arrives laden, when it pounces upon it, and a fierce struggle ensues. If the bee be laden with a piece of leaf only, the pirate speedily releases it, and lets it go into its hole; but if it be *not* laden with a rose-leaf, this assailant seizes the poor bee, throwing it upon its back, the struggle often lasting several minutes. The first impression of the observer is that it may be an ichneumon peculiar to these bees; but on scrutiny, this is found to be untenable; and as it cannot be its mate, the reasonable conclusion is that it is a robber, which steals its food from these bees when they are bringing the honey or pollen to their cells; and the fact that it always after actual seizure releases the bee without a struggle, when it finds it only laden with a rose-leaf, goes to confirm this conclusion.

Perhaps it would interest your readers to know how many pieces are required to form one cell. A cell was dissected, and found to consist of twelve parabolic pieces for the sides, one circular piece for the bottom, and three like it for the lid. Thus a bee has one hundred and twenty-eight

journeys to make for rose-leaves only, to build a nest of eight cells. How many more it must make for pollen and honey, can only be conjectured. The twelve parabolic pieces overlap each other again and again. Three form the cylindrical tube, or complete the circle; and the bee keeps on overlapping these first three with more pieces again and again, until it has got four times three in all, or has an average thickness equal to that of four times the thickness of a rose-leaf, presumably to make the cells sufficiently strong and impervious to moisture and the surrounding sand.

The rose-bees do not live in communities, but each makes its own separate burrow, often only a few inches apart from that of its neighbour; and though twenty or thirty bees may be seen upon one rose-tree, there is no hindrance to each and all getting what they require for the nests of their young. No strife disturbs, no envy troubles them. The only objects of their care and anxiety are their successors. Ever busy and anxious for the welfare of their offspring, they pursue their unwearying task till it is completed.

#### A TALK WITH A DETECTIVE.

A TALK with a detective is generally interesting, and often instructive. We have a very acute officer in the city, and from him I learned a little regarding the difficulty experienced in tracking criminals. Some years ago, an extensive forgery was reported to the police; and on the evening of the same day a serious burglary was carried out in a jeweller's premises in the city. There was not the slightest trace of the daring criminals. The detective department was in despair; and the usual outcry as to the inefficiency of the police began to make itself heard. The detective told off for the burglary chanced to obtain a slight trace of some of the missing property, suspicion having attached itself to the inmates of a certain house, owing to their lavish expenditure of money. Further inquiries only strengthened the suspicion; but although there was the strongest proof that the police were on the right trail, none of the jewellery or silver plate could be discovered. This was exasperating, more especially as the detective had been assured that the property was actually taken into that house. The officer went to the station very despondent, and sought to beguile his thoughts by reading a volume of Edgar Allan Poe's stories. He had got the length of 'The Missing Letter,' when he started up, blaming his own folly, and proceeded again to the suspected house. Acting on the suggestion of the tale, he determined, this time, not to look under carpets and into mysterious cavities, or to tear up hollow-sounding portions of the floor. Knowing now that the safest place to hide anything was where people would never think of looking—as in the case of the letter staring the searchers in the face from the mantel-piece—the detective, accompanied by another officer, went into the house; and there, outside one of the windows looking to the back-green, and attached by a strong cord to the lintel, they found a bag containing all the silver plate.

But there was no trace of the jewels, some of which were of great value. The officers had another look round, a little encouraged by their partial success. The main room was elegantly

furnished, the oriel window being gay with a rich parterre of flowers in handsome Satsuma ware vases. My informant went forward to the window, took hold of one of the plants, when it came away in his hand, revealing the fact, that the earth in the pot did not reach the bottom of the vase. In a few minutes, the whole property was recovered from the several vases. An arrest and conviction followed, with a sentence of ten years' penal servitude to each of the ingenious thieves.

While the prisoners were awaiting their trial, one of them dropped a hint which rather enlightened a turnkey on the subject of the forgery, which, as above mentioned, had also happened on the same day as the theft. The detective was at once made aware of the information, which at first appeared insignificant. But this 'trifle light as air' proved important enough. The slight clue was followed up with relentless perseverance, with the result of bringing to light the fact that the forger had spent large sums of money in the very house where the burglars had been arrested. It was easy to get information from the inmates who had not been taken into custody. The detective at last became aware that the man he was in search of was betrothed to a young lady, the daughter of a very prominent citizen. Curiously enough, the crime had not got into the newspapers; while, on the other hand, the authorities had been heavily handicapped through the absence of any photograph of the criminal. The detective called upon the young lady, when he had assured himself of the absence of her parents, and asked her quietly to show him her album. With great self-possession, the girl brought the book, and looked steadily at her visitor's face; nor did she exhibit the slightest feeling when the detective, with a half-smile, congratulated her on being a clever woman, although he thought she might have been even more so, if she had filled up the page from which she had taken the photograph which had faced her own. He left the house with the conviction that while the girl knew of the whereabouts of her lover, she was a match for the cleverest of criminal officers. Let me tell the story in the detective's own words.

'As I went about, considerably annoyed at the way we had been checkmated, I saw the girl come out of a shop. Strolling in, I purchased a small article, and learned from the garrulous shopkeeper that he had just sold a large trunk. Here was a new phase. The young lady, it was generally admitted, had a great regard for the young man, and would very probably do all in her power to save him. Did she intend to leave the city? That was the point to be determined. I also learned, through proceedings which I am not called upon to explain, that the young lady had a private account at a bank in the city—not the one where the forgery had been committed—and took steps to ascertain her money transactions; when, to my infinite surprise, I was told that on the previous day she had withdrawn a sum of fifteen hundred pounds, explaining that she wished to place it in an investment of a private nature. But imagine my astonishment when I learned that on a certain day, about the time the forgery was committed, she had lodged nine hundred pounds—a hundred less than the sum obtained by the forger. I now resolved to set my knowledge and authority

against a woman's wits, not at all hopeful of the result.

"I met her in the street, where she affected not to recognise me. I followed; and when we came to a quieter thoroughfare, she turned, and at once addressed me by name. After some expressions of regret at the nature of my duties, I let her understand all I knew of the case, at the close giving a threat to the effect that I might be called upon to arrest her as an abettor in forgery. Even this did not affect her. Another thought struck me when I saw something white peeping from her hand-basket, and I bluntly asked her for the letter she had just received at the General Post-office. Without a pause, she handed me a letter bearing the post-mark of New York. We had suspected that the forger was in America; but inquiries at the post-office had satisfied me that no letters had been received addressed to the young lady, and I also knew that fear of her parents would prevent any communication between the parties. So, when I received this letter, my labours seemed about ended; for this being the first epistle, and the contemplated flight being taken into account, there was every reason to believe that the letter now in my possession simply meant the speedy capture of the forger. The girl bowed and passed on; but there was something approaching a smile on her face as she parted from me. The letter was bulky, and the envelope had a somewhat frayed appearance, as if it had fallen amongst water. "With breathless speed, like a soul in chase," I tore the envelope open, only to find every sheet of paper perfectly blank! I looked them over and over again, went to the office, and tried sympathetic inks, obtained a microscope—in short, made every effort to satisfy myself that I had not been duped. At last, I confessed that the girl had been too much for me.

"Fortunately for my peace of mind, I had not acquainted any of my colleagues with the slightest idea of my partial success, so that they had no occasion to rejoice at my discomfiture—a discomfiture bitter enough; for when I made inquiries the next day, I found that my bird had flown. I instantly hurried to Greenock—this was before the days of the Atlantic cable—only to see the large steamer sailing away to the West. A few months afterwards, I received a letter in a woman's hand, bearing the post-mark of a little township in the Rocky Mountains. This was all it contained: "You're a smart fellow, but no match for a loving woman. An old envelope full of blank paper is quite good enough for such as you. Had you been more civil, I might have taught you the art of re-gumming old love-letters!—Farewell. I am quite happy."

#### SAFETY APPLIANCES FOR SWIMMERS.

As the season approaches when thousands of inland people resort to the coast to spend a portion of the summer months, we generally hear a good deal said about the various appliances for protecting or saving the lives of those bathers who *can't* swim, but we seldom hear any proposals made in behalf of the bathers who *do* swim. Yet these latter form a class which are not by any means exempted from danger; and never a season passes without numerous instances of bathers swimming too far out and being unable to return,

or being seized with weakness or cramp, and going to the bottom like a stone before aid can reach them. Were swimmers in such emergencies supplied with some simple means of floatage till help should reach them, many a life might be saved that is otherwise lost. In order to meet this want, Mr R. H. Wallace-Dunlop, C.B., has patented what he calls 'swimming-plates,' which are manufactured by Mr R. J. Hammond, 78 Edgware Road, London. According to the illustrated pamphlet supplied to us, these swimming-plates consist of flat oval plates attached to the hands and feet, and their use is said to be easily learned. These plates are intended to give floating power, diving power, endurance, and speed to swimmers, and have, we believe, been much patronised in America. They enable an average swimmer to carry a considerable weight in water, and to swim at a greater speed; while the increased buoyancy which they afford enables weak swimmers to go long distances, or to lie motionless on the surface, without the constrained breathing of ordinary floating.

There exists, no doubt, among expert swimmers a prejudice against all kinds of artificial aids; but such a prejudice is essentially narrow and ill-founded. To insist that we should not add by scientific means to our natural powers of floatage or locomotion in swimming, is no more reasonable than if we were to hold that boots and shoes were not supplied us by nature, and should therefore be discarded in walking. Man is not naturally a *swimming* animal; the power is one that must be acquired. In dealing, therefore, with an accomplishment which is in its essentials artificial, it cannot surely be out of place to make use of artificial helps. But the chief argument for the use of such appliances is the increased safety which they afford; and whatever is qualified to diminish the painful catalogue of deaths by drowning which every summer brings us, is deserving of candid and unprejudiced consideration.

#### ON SEEING A YOUNG LADY KISS A ROSE.

MAY loving friends surround and cheer;  
May heaven bless and keep her safe  
From harm in every coming year.

I saw her tears fall softly down;  
I saw her stoop the Rose to kiss;  
Her hair was bright and soft and brown.

And was this Rose a lover's gift?  
And did it speak of faith and troth?  
Ah! shall I now the curtain lift?

O'ershadowed by that radiance mild,  
Behold, a little breathing frame,  
A fragile, pain-worn, workhouse child.

Her name is 'Rose;' and she is white,  
White as a faded lily-flower;  
But soon shall be an angel bright.

Over the low couch bent, I wist,  
Holding the little hand in hers—  
*This was the Rose the lady kissed.*

ELIZABETH GILES.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH.